

Message Text

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ACTION EB-08

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 ISO-00 CAB-02 CIAE-00 COME-00

DODE-00 DOTE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 FAA-00 MCT-01 SY-05

L-03 H-01 SCS-03 CA-01 (ISO) W

-----018690 261736Z /40

P 261145Z OCT 77

FM AMEMBASSY LOME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3044

INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MONROVIA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L L O M E 2928

BRUSSELS, ROME AND MONROVIA FOR FAA

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAIR TO

SUBJ: CIVAIR:DESTRUCTION OF CONSTELLATION N-273-R

1. REQUEST FAA CONTACT MR MAIERHOFFER, CIM ASSOCIATES, FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA, AND ADVISE HIM THAT HIS COMPANY'S CONSTALLATION N-273-R CAUGHT FIRE EVENING 21 OCTOBER AND WAS HEAVILY DAMAGED. EMBOFF HAS INSPECTED AIRCRAFT AND BELIEVES LITTLE, IF ANY, PARTS CAN BE SALVAGED. AIRFRAME AND COCKPIT BOTH COMPLETELY DESTROYED. TOGOLESE GOVERNMENT IS INVESTIGATING WHAT MIGHT HAVE CAUSED CONFLAGRATION AND EMBASSY WILL ADVISE THROUGH THIS CHANNEL IF AND WHEN INVESTIGATION RESULTS ARE RELEASED.

2. FYI ONLY AND NOT FOR PASSAGE TO MAIERHOFFER:
SOURCE WITH ACCESS TO PRELIMINARY RESULTS OF INVESTIGATION NOTES TOGOLESE STRONGLY SUSPECT FOUL PLAY. GUARD NEAR PLANE SAW WOODEN LADDER PROPPED AGAINST
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PLANE AND INTERIOR LIGHTS ON MOMENTS BEFORE FIRE STARTED. GUARD RAN TO TELL AIRPORT SECURITY OFFICERS ABOUT LIGHTS AND LADDER, BUT WHEN SECURITY OFFICIALS HAD REACHED AIRCRAFT, IT WAS ALREADY IN FLAMES. AIRPORT FIRE APPARATUS RESPONDED IMMEDIATELY TO ALARM, BUT WERE UNABLE EXTINGUISH FLAMES BEFORE PLANE WAS DESTROYED.

3. SAME SOURCE SAYS TOGOLESE INVESTIGATORS BELIEVE THERE MIGHT BE SOME CONNECTION BETWEEN FIRE AND VISIT TO LOME OF MAIERHOFFER'S REPRESENTATIVE, MR JOSEPH MEROLA, EARLIER THIS MONTH TO INSPECT PLANE AND DETERMINE ITS DISPOSITION. MR MEROLA VISITED THE EMBASSY OCT 11, AT WHICH TIME HE TOLD EMBASSY OFFICERS THAT HE WAS HERE TO INSPECT THE PLANE AND REACH AN AGREEMENT WITH THE TOGOLESE AUTHORITIES AS TO ITS DISPOSITION. HE SAID HE HAD ALREADY MADE A PRELIMINARY INSPECTION OF THE PLANE. INQUIRIES MADE SINCE THE FIRE REVEAL THAT MEROLA VISITED THE PLANE A SECOND TIME AND DEPARTED LOME ON OCT 18. HE DID NOT INFORM TOGOLESE AUTHORITIES OR THE EMBASSY WHAT, IF ANY, DECISION HE REACHED. AS DEPARTMENT AND FAA AWARE, N-273-R HAD BEEN SITTING AT LOME AIRPORT SINCE NOVEMBER 1976 IN NEED REPAIRS AND SPARE PARTS. PARKING FEES ACCRUED ARE IN EXCESS OF \$12,000.

4. TOGOLESE AIRPORT POLICE HAVE ASKED EMBASSY HELP IN LEARNING IF N-273-R WAS INSURED OR IF AMOUNTS OF INSURANCE WERE INCREASED DURING THE LAST 12 MONTHS.

5. WISH TO UNDERLINE THAT EMBASSY IS NOT PRESENTLY IN POSITION TO ATTEMPT INDEPENDENT VERIFICATION OF TOGOLESE SUSPICIONS THAT FIRE WAS NOT ACCIDENTAL. YOUNG

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Sent Date: 26-Oct-1977 12:00:00 am
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